

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PATERSON MAYOR ANDRE SAYEGH ANNOUNCES MAJOR
POLICE/COMMUNITY RELATIONS INITIATIVES**

“I know you have been waiting to hear more from me regarding these recent events. I come here impatient, like all of you. When facts are available, I am committed to providing them to the family and this community in an open and transparent manner. I have heard the community’s concerns about having the Attorney General take over the investigation. I want to assure you that I have been in contact with Attorney General Grewal numerous times. He is providing oversight of the work being performed by the Passaic County Prosecutor, our chief law enforcement officer in this county.

But what I am here to discuss today is that the recent set of events reminds us all that trust in law enforcement has been eroded in our community. It didn’t start with this incident or this administration. This is a challenge faced by urban communities across the country.

But I also recognize there have been specific incidents here in Paterson that have played a significant role in the erosion of trust in law enforcement. Police officers who have been charged and convicted of crimes that violated their oath of office while on duty. Incidents involving allegations of excessive force between police and African-American and Latino residents, and other residents of color. Incidents of lack of professionalism by police officers as they interact with Patersonians.

And so, we will implement the following initiatives over the next several weeks and months to begin rebuilding that trust, with more details to follow:

1. Commissioning a top to bottom audit of our Police Department from an independent authority who are experts in these matters. We recognize the need for an objective opinion because of the many events that have led to the mistrust in our community. My expectation is that the Police Director and Police Chief will provide their full cooperation in this effort as they too are committed to improvement.
2. Pursuing Body Cameras. We are actively researching funding, but this has proven to be helpful in building trust in communities like ours across the country.
3. Creating a Citizen Advisory Board. This board will consist of Patersonians from every ward in this city, and the City Council members will have the opportunity to identify potential members. The board will have meetings with police leaders as well as regular public meetings with the community. Their mission will be multifaceted: to achieve

transparency, increase credibility, obtain outside and independent opinions, and receive feedback and support. This will help us avoid mistrust, misunderstanding, and miscommunication.

4. Prioritizing attracting and retaining Paterson residents as police officers. We want to have a diverse workforce that is culturally sensitive to the community, just like the 6 people we swore in on Monday to begin the Police Academy.
5. Expanding our Chaplaincy Program. This is a way to include more training for officers from community faith leaders in de-escalation, crisis intervention, as well as cultural and racial sensitivity.

“One Paterson” was more than just a message, it’s a mission. And this is a call for unity, which starts with trust. Serving as a police officer is not an easy job – we all know that. But it is a job that requires trust. And it is perfectly reasonable for people’s faith and trust in law enforcement to be shaken.

These initiatives will tackle this mistrust head on and can put us back on the path to a city where all feel they are treated the same and receive the same protection and help. I want to reassure you that your concerns have been heard and I will demand accountability and transparency. I will own this work and am committed to restoring the community’s trust in those who protect and serve.”